

**EVALUATION OF THE NATIVE-SPEAKING ENGLISH TEACHER SCHEME IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2015 – 2016  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

The evaluation of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in Primary Schools (PNET Scheme) described in this report employed a sequential mixed-method approach using online surveys of key stakeholders followed by case studies. It explored the impact of the Scheme on primary students' learning of English with regard to the English-speaking environment of the school, local teachers' and NETs' pedagogical practices, and the use of English in the classroom. The study collected data on stakeholders' background and activities, as well as their views of the effectiveness of NET deployment, utilisation, integration, and support in schools, and the collaboration between NETs and their local colleagues. It also asked stakeholders about the support received from the Advisory Teachers (ATs) and the NET Section, the progress made on the key recommendations from the previous evaluation (Griffin, Woods, Storey, et al. 2007), and how the PNET Scheme might be improved.

In the literature review comparing the NET Schemes in Hong Kong with similar schemes in the region, including Japan, Korea and Taiwan, the research team pointed out that only Hong Kong had conducted and published external evaluations on its NET Schemes. In addition, Hong Kong's NET Schemes had a more fully developed support system for professional and curriculum development.

Questionnaire surveys were developed and piloted, and refined after piloting before links to the online versions were released to participating schools. A similar process of development, piloting and refinement was followed for the interview protocols and observation schedules before they were put into practice in the case studies.

Over 13,000 participants were surveyed, including students, parents, local teachers, NETs, School Heads, and NET Section personnel. To enable the research team to gain a more in-depth understanding of the operation of the Scheme, 40 interviews were conducted, including 32 in eight case study schools with local teachers, NETs, English Panel Chairs and School Heads, and 8 with NET Section personnel, in addition to 24 observations of the English environment of schools, co-planning meetings, and classrooms in which team-teaching took place.

Multi-stage sampling was used to obtain a representative sample of 104 schools willing to participate and 79 schools successfully completed the questionnaire phase of the study, representing 16.9% of the total number of primary schools participating in the PNET Scheme in the 2014/15 school year.

A total of 18 findings identified after statistical analysis of responses to the online surveys indicated that stakeholders generally held positive perceptions of the impact on the PNET Scheme on students' English learning, on the English-speaking environment of the school and on the use of pedagogical practices by English teachers. Findings indicated that the majority of all stakeholders support the Scheme.

Key survey findings (noted as "SF") include the following:

- The majority of stakeholders believe the PNET Scheme contributes to students' English learning (SF1).
- The majority of students hold positive views of NET-LET collaboration (SF3).

---

<sup>1</sup> A Chinese version of this summary is also provided. In case there are discrepancies between the English and Chinese versions, it is the English version that should be referred to.

- The majority of stakeholders believe the PNET Scheme helps to enhance the English-speaking environment of the school (SF4).
- Stakeholders believe NETs contribute to LETs' use of expanded pedagogical practices (SF7).
- The majority of stakeholders believe the Scheme's professional development activities enhance LETs' pedagogical practices (SF9).
- The majority of all stakeholders support the Scheme and would like more NETs if resources allow (SF17).

Survey responses, and in particular responses to open-ended questions within the surveys were analysed to identify 8 schools for further investigation through case study. While the findings from quantitative analysis of the surveys suggested that a majority of the stakeholders held positive views of the PNET Scheme, there were also challenges and/or strong and divergent views among key stakeholders (NET, LETs, School Heads). The case studies included a representative proportion of schools that, based on these indications of divergence, appeared to be 'struggling' with implementation of the Scheme, as well as schools that were 'excelling' in their operation of the Scheme. This allowed for triangulation to substantiate interpretations of the quantitative data with findings from the qualitative data including responses from the open-ended survey questions, the eight case studies, and the interviews conducted with NET Section personnel. Overall, these data corroborate the positive overall findings in the surveys, but they also shed light on the divergences that raise specific issues that if addressed could improve effectiveness of the Scheme.

37 of the 40 interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed; and in three cases in which participants opted not to have the interview recorded, copious notes were taken. Qualitative analysis of 40 transcripts/notes and the 24 observation reports was undertaken by at least two research team members and compared, and supplemented by text mining. This analysis generated a total of 40 additional findings. These generally supported the positive attitudes to the Scheme identified in the survey findings.

Stakeholders reported that the Scheme (including the presence of the NET, the work of the Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) and the various programmes' support of collaboration), helped to improve student English proficiency, demonstrated by what stakeholders perceived as significant advances in students' literacy skills as well as enhanced oral fluency, confidence, and better pronunciation. Stakeholders also stated that the Scheme led to an increased use of English in the classroom and enhanced students' motivation to learn.

Key case study (CS) findings include the following:

- Stakeholders provided indirect evidence of improved student English proficiency in speaking through active, fun, learning activities that motivate students (CF1).
- The emphasis on co-teaching and the presence of a NET in the school have increased student motivation and the degree to which English is used in the classroom (CF3).
- Participants mentioned the value of the contributions of the NET to the English speaking environment of the school including contributions to cultural awareness, decoration of classrooms with English-related material, the operation of the English room, and whole-school activities, school assemblies and 'English Fun Days' and more opportunities for teachers and students to speak English (CF8)
- Several participants mentioned the resources which the PNET Scheme can make available to schools, including programme schools involved in the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing (PLP-R/W) and the Development of Text Sets (DTS) Project, but also in non-programme schools, where ATs would regularly provide resources and teaching ideas

through their general support roles. The work of the NET in locating suitable additional resources was also mentioned and valued by school personnel (CF10).

- Interviewees generally recognised the role of the Scheme in increasing the amount of English used in the classroom, improving LETs' repertoire of pedagogical practices and their spoken English (CF14 & 15).
- Having teachers (both NETs and LETs) who are open and willing to learn from each other is vital to collaboration, recognised by all participants as a cornerstone of the PNET Scheme (CF20 & 23).
- Holding regular co-planning meetings prior to co-teaching was widely perceived as a key factor in promoting collaboration between NET and LETs. In non-programme schools (schools not signing up for a project like PLP-R/W), the failure to set aside time for co-planning was perceived as an impediment to effective collaboration (CF24 & 26).
- The importance of experience and qualifications among NETs was emphasised and seen as impacting on the nature of the collaboration possible between very experienced LETs and less experienced NETs, as well as on the role of the ATs in supporting the NETs (CF29).
- Another factor that was perceived to impact the effectiveness of collaboration in schools is the degree to which the NET is treated as a team member (CF30).
- The support of the School Head was seen as an important factor in determining the success of collaboration (CF31).
- A common perception among nearly all LETs, English Panel Chairs and School Heads was that one NET was not sufficient (CF36).

The overall findings of the evaluation point to the success of the Scheme in achieving its objectives and having a positive impact on the learning and teaching of English in the primary schools. Stakeholders acknowledge the contribution of the Scheme to enhancing students' English learning by effecting improvements in general proficiency, literacy skills, oral fluency and accuracy, confidence and motivation. Evidence was found of an enhanced repertoire of pedagogical practices and increased use of English in the classroom by local teachers engendered by the co-planning and co-teaching modelled and supported by Advisory Teachers. Effective NET deployment, utilisation and integration were facilitated by the support of the School Head and an openness and willingness to collaborate among both NETs and local teachers. Findings indicate that progress has been made in implementing key recommendations of the 2007 evaluation with the majority of NETs attending English Panel Meetings and reporting on their activities and enhanced collaboration and greater use of English between teachers and students in class and between teachers in the school environment.

In light of these findings, the following nine recommendations are made:

1. Continue to work to create a collegial culture among all teachers in primary schools so that NETs and LETs are treated and viewed as part of a team.
2. Review the current system for NET recruitment to ensure teachers recruited through the Scheme have the appropriate qualifications and experience for the positions and tasks for which they are hired.
3. Continue to explore ways to strengthen support for larger primary schools in the public sector in promoting English Language Education.
4. Continue to improve public relations that will inspire teachers, draw in potential qualified and experienced NETs, and inform and engage the parents, the public, and legislators of what the Scheme is accomplishing.

5. Continue to support schools with ATs, the induction programme for new teachers recruited into the Scheme, professional development workshops for all English teachers, and curriculum development that addresses new areas of need.
6. Continue to establish communication channels with NET organisations and seek out their support to provide insight into NET issues and potential solutions.
7. Continue to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Scheme including formal evaluations every six to eight years and annual informal assessments.
8. Continue to review and revise the deployment guidelines and disseminate them.
9. Continue to encourage English panel members to focus on students' English language needs and learning, and teachers' curriculum adjustments and professional development.